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THE PHILIPPINE CIVIL SERVICE AND WHAT IT OFFERS

BY JOHN R. ARNOLD

SOME one has said, with more than a little truth, that for the majority of Americans the history of our most important dependency ended with the capture of Aguinaldo. Whatever the measure of truth of this statement, it has had the unfortunate result of leaving all the subsequent policy of our Government, and the reputation of the Islands in general, a target for all kinds of misleading criticism, especially at the hands of a large body of American ex-residents who, victims while here of a tropical homesickness like that pictured so strikingly in Kipling's "Christmas in India," have returned to edify their sympathizing relatives and the editor of the local paper with accounts of the disadvantages—for the most part either imaginary or distorted—that make the Philippines, in their words, "no place for a white man."

The atmosphere thus created tends continually to hamper us in our task of maintaining in the Islands a reasonably stable body of American civil servants, equipped for their task not only by their knowledge, but by their mental attitude; and increases what would in any case be among our greatest difficulties in that we have at home no leisure class of "younger sons" such as in England find colonial service traditionally and socially attractive, while the pressure of numbers in the learned and technical professions is not yet great enough to force young men to seek such a distant field of work.

It is precisely because these difficulties exist that we who are still, more or less consciously, taking an active part in this great and novel experiment in the government of an undeveloped people owe it to ourselves, not indeed to claim that conditions here are millennial, but to state, what I be-

lieve to be the truth, that the work we are doing is one in which the energies of educated men can be worthily employed; and that, furthermore, the opportunities of the members of the Philippine Civil Service with respect to income, tenure, and such incidental matters as travel, amusement, and social intercourse have been generally misconceived and underrated. It will be my purpose now to make plain the reasons on which this opinion is based.

The first point, clearly, is to show with what prospects and by what means a man who has once become interested can secure an opening. Examinations, as the result of which nearly all new appointments are made, are given periodically in the principal cities of the country by the United States Civil Service Commission. Some of them are of a technical nature intended to secure men trained as physicians, surveyors, accountants, and so forth; others are more general in their scope, as, for example, the teachers', stenographers', and assistants' examinations. The first of these two latter have the reputation of being fairly difficult of their kind, but they are hardly novel enough to require any detailed description; the last is intended to test the general education of such candidates as have no special "trade." With the exception of "Colonial Government" and possibly "Economics," none of the subjects presuppose a college training, nor are the questions, as a rule, very profound; but they do cover a great deal of ground, they demand an extensive and accurate knowledge of details, and the marking is pretty rigid. A general average of seventy per cent. is required as a passing grade. Supposing this to be attained, the applicant's prospects of actual appointment will, of course, depend on a great variety of considerations about which it is hardly possible to generalize. Technical men are often badly needed; others, under present conditions, have what may fairly be called a good chance. In any case the taking of the examination opens a fair field, while at the same time it involves little expense and no risk whatever.

Once the applicant has arrived at the point where the choice between acceptance and rejection lies in his own hands, the question of most immediate concern is the amount of salary offered; and this is to be considered, if the figures are to have any value, in direct connection with the normal rate of expenses in the community where he must live. Most technical and professional men are at present appointed with

salaries of at least fourteen hundred dollars; but the general rule is to start Americans newly arrived from the United States at twelve hundred. These latter are enrolled in the lowest of nine grades or "classes," the compensation of which increases at intervals of two hundred dollars up to Class Five at two thousand, and thence at intervals of two hundred and fifty. Promotions must ordinarily be of not more than one class and not less than a year apart, though the first may come at any time after six months of probational service; under any other circumstances an increase of salary is approved only in cases where unusual merit or greatly increased responsibility is shown to exist. It would plainly be dangerous to attempt any very definite statement as to the rapidity with which an appointee under these conditions can expect to be advanced; but one thing, of course, is true of this service as of practically every calling: there is a period of a few years, say three to five, during which any employee who shows himself reasonably intelligent and energetic may expect to be promoted up to a certain point without waiting for special vacancies to occur. Outside of some teaching positions, the salaries of which are arranged on a different scale, it is safe to say that such a man in the Philippines, if appointed at twelve hundred dollars, may consider as fairly certain a second promotion to sixteen hundred before the end of this period; and a third, to eighteen hundred, as well within his reach. Those who entered originally in a higher class should be proportionately better off.

It is better to postpone for a moment any discussion of the chances for advancement beyond this point in order to take up, while these figures are fresh in the reader's mind, the question of the purchasing value of these salaries as expressed in terms of the cost of living in this part of the world. This is far from an easy matter, because on such a point a clerk transferred from a departmental position in the City of Magnificent Prices must evidently have a standard of judgment very different from that of his fellow just arrived from the rural South or West. Still, it is beyond reasonable dispute that any American must be prepared while resident here for certain increases in his expenses and obligations. Rents are high everywhere, owing chiefly to the comparative scarcity of buildings which from the Occidental point of view can be called comfortable or even

decent. Board is relatively high, because all places which cater to Americans serve for the most part imported articles; and a judicious compromise between native and foreign diet, though probably more hygienic as well as cheaper, is very hard to obtain. Laundry, moreover, in this land of white clothes is bound to be a heavy item. Taking all this into consideration, it may be said that the lowest usual cost of reasonably good board and lodging for a single person is thirty-five dollars a month, increasing in some situations to thirty-seven and a half or forty. Higher rates are often charged by more pretentious establishments, but can hardly be looked upon as normal. To any of these must be added a sum of approximately five dollars a month for laundry. In the case of families, it is a little dangerous for one not qualified by experience to attempt to give estimates; but I believe that the living expenses, including laundry and necessary servants, for a family of two could seldom fall short of double the minimum for one person, say seventy dollars, and would rise from this point with increasing numbers and the individual's notion of what his comfort and social position demanded.

It is necessary also to take into consideration a certain increase in the cost of many miscellaneous articles, resulting both from the expense of importation and from the high profits naturally expected by foreign merchants, especially Americans. As might be inferred from this, much can be saved by trading in the more out-of-the-way places, especially with the Chinese, remembering, by the way, that with this peculiar people one needs a certain "canniness" and no little patience to avoid barefaced cheating. This item of extra expense cannot be figured out with any exactness, but it must be reckoned with.

Last of all, the American here is confronted with a new obligation—that of providing for the transportation when returning to the United States of himself and any who may be dependent on him. The expense of coming to the Islands does not have to be considered, as it is advanced by the Government and does not ultimately come out of the employee's pocket. Without going into details, it may be said that the man who is figuring on the basis of a three years' stay (the minimum if he intends to return for a second period) must lay by in one form or another, as a fairly liberal provision for his own transportation, from seventy-five

to a hundred dollars for each year of this stay, plus a similar amount for any adult of his family or half as much for a child. Passage can frequently be secured to San Francisco on an army transport at a cost of about thirty dollars for each person, but this can in no sense be relied upon.

It is now desirable to sum up these scattered figures in regard to salaries and expenses, and to see just what light our knowledge of the latter throws on the vexed question of the purchasing value of the former. If for one person we must allow from seventy-five to a hundred dollars a year as provision for transportation and fifteen to twenty dollars a month for increase in living expenses, we cannot, if we are to leave any leeway for the increased cost of miscellaneous necessities, estimate the difference between the purchasing value of a salary here and at home as less than three hundred and fifty to four hundred dollars for a single man or from five to seven hundred for one with a family. Personally I regard this estimate as generous, or something more; but, considering that the long journeys and the general atmosphere of the American colony tend to encourage spending, it would probably be wise to let it stand as an average.

If we carry the calculation one step farther, and deduct these amounts from the figures given when we were touching on salaries, it would appear that the man appointed to the service at twelve hundred dollars may, if he is single, reckon his salary as having a purchasing value, after all deductions, of eight hundred or possibly nine hundred; if he is married, at not over seven hundred and not improbably as low as five hundred. Substituting, however, in this comparison the salaries which, it was stated, could reasonably be expected at the end of the first few years of more or less automatic promotions, the relative values would be for the former twelve to thirteen hundred; for the latter, nine to eleven hundred. These figures, unless observation and experience have greatly deceived me, indicate that the single man who enters the Philippine Civil Service at an early age—say twenty-two—is placed for some years in a position which, as compared with the average of his own age and education at home, must be called distinctly favorable. Those whose professional or technical schooling prevents them from beginning quite so early are apparently less well placed; their promotion, on the other hand, is likely to be more rapid. For the man with a family it may be frankly

admitted that conditions are not at the start very favorable. Many do come out with their wives at the usual entrance salary; but I do not think it can fairly be called other than very risky for Americans to attempt to practise love in a cottage in the Philippines. The importance of this handicap is very much diminished, however, by the fact that, both for pecuniary and other reasons, it is clearly to the advantage of any man to enter the service as young as practicable. With the salary which, we have calculated, he has a fair chance of attaining by the time he is twenty-six or seven, he is still in a position to marry about as young as most stay-at-home Americans of the same degree of education.

In what has been said so far I have purposely avoided discussing the prospects of a member of the Philippine Service after he has once passed these first years of apprenticeship and reasonably certain promotions. This is a question on which, in speaking of any calling, it would not be very safe to dogmatize; since such prospects must depend chiefly on the occurrence of vacancies and on the impression made by the man and his work upon his superiors, while these in their turn depend on such incalculable elements as the capacity, the temperament, the luck, if you will, of the individual. Still, every ladder has its top rungs, and in the long run a fair reward will usually come to such as give their best energies; unless, indeed, the conditions which govern such matters are, in their particular calling, abnormal. If it can be shown that these conditions in the Philippines are very much less abnormal than is sometimes alleged, the result will go far to prove that our service offers about the same chances of advancement as do other careers.

The first and most striking of the arguments which would commonly be advanced against this position is to the effect that at some indefinite time this Government will be violently transferred from the hands of Americans to those of Filipinos, and that as a consequence the careers of such of the former as may then be in the service will be abruptly ended. So far as this view is based on our widely proclaimed intention of preparing the Filipinos as soon as may be for self-government, it should be enough to point out that such a course of action would not only be a grave injustice to a large body of public servants, but also a complete reversal of our present common-sense determination to make haste slowly. Our object here both can, and ought

to be, accomplished gradually by appointing Filipinos to such suitable posts as may in the usual course fall vacant, so that when the shift of control finally comes there will be no difficulty in making fair provision for the relatively small number of experienced Americans who would then remain.

There are others, however, who advance this same argument on different grounds. They say that even if our own authorities do not consciously bring about such a catastrophe, it will probably come through defeat in war with some foreign country, through a local insurrection, or even through our own Democratic party winning an election and incontinently cutting the tow-line. Neither of the first two of these events is impossible, but doubtless most cool-headed men on both sides of the ocean would agree in pronouncing them unlikely. The idea that the third is probable is based on a total misunderstanding of the time-honored propensity of Anglo-Saxon minority parties to find useful as campaign ammunition some violent denunciation of their opponents' policy, only to recoil when victorious from the consequences of giving their threats practical effect. There is a possibility that any human organization may some day go to the wall; it exists in the Philippines as in the best-established mercantile concern, but I doubt if it is any greater.

This, of course, is not the only argument put forward to show that the path of advancement here is beset with abnormal obstacles. It is contended by many that the highly paid posts are neither so numerous nor so quickly reached as similar positions would ordinarily be in the United States. Such a statement is easy to make and almost impossible to prove or disprove. No doubt the salaries sometimes paid at home to the ablest technical and professional men are beyond the resources of this Government. It is equally true that some individuals, in any line of work, would miss their calling by coming here; but when this same claim is made offhand by any and every employee who chances to feel a trifle discontented, I for one am frankly incredulous, for the attitude is in many cases too clearly the result of a double vision which looks at Philippine and at home conditions through opposite ends of the telescope. "If we only," say these men in effect, "were employed by some one besides this Government our promotion would be as the sparks fly upward"—a frame of mind which is apt to make

their hearers justly skeptical. The very numerous applications from former employees for reinstatement furnish, in my opinion, pretty good evidence of the extent to which this attitude is the merest self-delusion.

Another contention holds that the appointment of Filipinos, to which we have already referred, will, even if it does not actually cut short the careers of Americans, close to them the most desirable avenues of promotion. This is undoubtedly a real danger, but it ought with care to be averted. It is always possible, even if more direct methods do not seem feasible, to reserve advisory positions of suitable salary and dignity, like those in which English colonial administrators have done some of their most distinguished and indispensable work.

In the last place, it is urged that this Government has lagged behind all others of the kind as regards the establishment of a system of pensions or long-service retirement. It is a question if this has so far done much harm in practice, but it is undeniably a defect which will call before very long for a remedy. It is, in fact, already engaging the attention of those in control, and it is in all probability a mere question of time before this objection will, like the others enumerated, be fairly disposed of.

The points we have so far touched upon all relate to the purely financial and practical sides of the subject; but these, important as they are, do not always fill so large a space on the mental horizon of Americans as do the sacrifices of creature comforts and social amenities which most of them believe they must make if they are to fix their residence here. That this foreboding is to a certain extent justified it would be idle to deny; yet it would seem that many of these sacrifices have been very generally exaggerated, and that various advantages on the opposite side of the balance have not been sufficiently understood.

It is not necessary to dwell at any length on the fact that to enter the Philippine Service means living in the tropics. The worst things that have been said about the climate here have been abundantly disproved; for those who are willing to do as the Romans do, it is neither deadly nor abnormally uncomfortable. The best months of the year are very nearly ideal, while the worst part will henceforth see a large portion of the American civil servants removed to the summer capital at Baguio, in the cool plateau of

northern Luzon. Even without this last advantage many have managed to live here for upward of a decade in at least average health and spirits. It is certainly significant that a large proportion of those who take leave of absence "to get a change of climate" do so in April or May, which brings them home at a time of year when the advantages of a "temperate" zone are, to put it mildly, not strikingly apparent. Moreover, it does not appear that dislike of the climate actually plays any great part among the reasons assigned for the resignations that take place.

Of more real importance than the living in a tropical climate is the sense of distance from home and from the great centers of western civilization which strikes the newcomer when he realizes that he must reckon the normal period of waiting for an answer to a letter at very nearly three months; or that, after reading in the local paper a bare announcement that the Sultan of Turkey is deposed or the Mayor of New York shot, he must possess his soul in patience for five or six weeks before he sees an account with sufficient details to make the event intelligible. The number of Americans who have lived here and have not felt this must be very small; on the other hand, even setting aside the system of "accrued leave" whereby employees are assured of a vacation at home at intervals of three years or more, this very deprivation carries with it opportunities in the way of travel and of living in an extraordinarily interesting part of the world, which must, at least to a good many men, be very real privileges. The first of these, indeed, has been so much exploited and abused that I rather hesitate to dwell on it; for natural as it may be to regard a two or three years' stay here merely as a price to be paid for a trip around the world, it is clear that such a government by tourists would be hard to square with any sound conception of our position. Still, even with this reservation, the chances for "seeing the world" are to be reckoned among the very greatest advantages of the service. Far fewer, of course, will be those for whom the opportunity of merely living in this part of the world will have any appeal. Yet there are some who will feel that this being plunged into the very midst of the great melting-pot in which the ambitions and ideals of the primitive Malay, of the sixteenth-century Spaniard, and the twentieth-century American are being fused into an unpredictable product—that all

this, coupled with the nearness of the Philippines to an awakening China, and to a Japan that has become a great expanding power, to mention only two of many neighbors, quickens the imagination to a degree that overcomes the sense of exile; and it is these men who can be most unreservedly advised to come.

It is true, of course, that a residence here involves, beyond the actual separation from home, something of a sacrifice of the customary avocations and diversions of American social life. In Manila this does not amount to much more than the absence of first-class newspapers, and of theatrical entertainments outside of the cinematographs and an occasional peripatetic stock company on its way between the China coast and Australia. But in the provinces—except for a few of the larger towns—the choice of American, or, for that matter, of any Caucasian society, is likely to be pretty limited. The severity of these deprivations will, of course, depend in practice on individual tastes and habits. One who has hitherto found his chief pleasures in the closely-knit social life of a medium-sized American town will doubtless feel a sense of loss, but for most men there should be in the long run some very real compensations.

In the first place, they will find that our community, gathered from every State and Territory and from not a few foreign countries, is very tolerant of local or personal peculiarities. It has little unity; but its intercourse is characterized by a breadth and variety—an unconventionality, if you will—which is likely to be not displeasing to men whose tastes do not happen to be cast precisely in the mold that the "social circles" of the average American town prescribe for their members. They may not find it any easier to make acquaintances, but they are almost certain to find more easily just the kind of acquaintances they would like to make. Many would doubtless say that there is another side; that local opinion is too tolerant of some things which at home would be at least frowned upon in public. It is probably true that this is not the best place to send your children or your friends in the expectation that the pressure of the surrounding community will furnish them with a moral strait-jacket. But for such as do not need that kind of garment this looseness of the social structure means an opportunity for a kind of life that has the immense advantage of being independent and yet not secluded.

There is one other consideration which should also be at least placed before the American who is contemplating entrance upon this work: the fact that there is involved in it a very real chance for service of the kind that is not wholly for a man's self. On both sides of the ocean the somewhat blatant note with which we at the beginning proclaimed our altruistic purpose in the Philippines has died away into a whisper; to say much about it here is to incur a charge of hypocrisy or sentimentalism. Yet in spite of this I would maintain that this conception—that we are here primarily to teach the people we govern to do some things which it is practically certain that they could not now in the mass do for themselves—gives to our work a definite element of progress, in which lies its real source of strength. Such a position is morally impregnable save by a confession of cynicism or selfishness; and if we can get here enough men who take too deep an interest in the work they are doing to make such a confession, it will become impregnable from the point of view of practice as well. Nor, moreover, is this attitude incompatible with what is properly the first desire of a young man on entering any calling—namely, to advance himself. I have already tried to show that conditions in this service as to salary and tenure are, even by an exacting comparison, reasonably favorable; that to enter it means living in a most interesting world, and that the social sacrifices for which it calls are not without their compensations. It cannot detract from these advantages in the eyes of the kind of men who are most needed here to lay stress on the fact that this work, of which our country was the first to see the vision, is one worthy to be done; and that a part of the ultimate reward of those who engage in it will come when they see it progressing to a fair consummation and are able to write beside the record, *Quorum pars minima fui*.

JOHN RANDALL ARNOLD.